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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUCHAR 03113 191004Z

11
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 COME-00 DOTE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03

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---------- 046639
R 190924Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9397
INFO AMCONSUL MUNICH
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR, VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 3113

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ECON, RO
SUBJECT: ROMANIAN INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS - DAM AT CURTEA DE ARGES,
AND GALATI STEEL MILL

REF: A) BUCHAREST 2387; B) BUCHAREST 2775

SUMMARY:
1. STORIES OF CONTINUING OCCURRENCES OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS APPEAR UNABATED IN RECENT WEEKS. TWO SUCH EVENTS WHICH, TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN VERIFIED BY RELIABLE SOURCES AND, IN ONE CASE, BY DIRECT OBSERVATION, ARE SERIOUS ENOUGH TO BE OF MORE THAN PASSING INTEREST. EQUIPMENT FAILURE AT THE ARGES DAM AND HYDROELECTRIC POWER STATION (LOCATED A FEW KILOMETERS NORTH OF THE TOWN OF CURTEA DE ARGES, BETWEEN THE CITIES PITESTI AND SIBIU) RESULTED IN THE FLOODING OF A NEARBY VILLAGE, POWER INTERRUPTIONS, AND POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO A NEARBY SUBSTATION. AT THE IMPORTANT IRON AND STEEL COMPLEX IN GALATI, THE REPORTED BURSTING OF A NEW SPECIAL STEEL FURNACE ALLEGEDLY CAUSED THE DEATHS OF SIX WORKMEN AND HAS PUT THE SECTION OUT OF OPERATION FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. END SUMMARY

2. VIDRARU DAM AT DAM AT CURTEA DE ARGES - PIECED TOGETHER FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, AND VERIFIED IN PART FROM DIRECT OBSERVATION BY THE
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PAGE 02 BUCHAR 03113 191004Z

EMBASSY DEFENSE ATTACHE IS THIS ACCOUNT OF THE ARGES

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

DAM FAILURE.
ON OR ABOUT JULY 5, A CAVE-IN OF LAND SURROUNDING THE MAIN DAM RESERVOIR FOULED THE MECHANISM FOR OPERATING A SLUICE GATE WHICH REMAINED OPENED LONG ENOUGH TO FLOOD MUCH OF THE SURROUNDING AREA, INCLUDING THE VILLAGE OF CORBENI, CAUSING EXTENSIVE WATER DAMAGE AND WASHING AWAY SECTIONS OF ROAD. VILLAGE INHABITANTS TERMED THE EVENT A "CATASTROPHE." POWER INTERRUPTIONS ALSO RESULTED, POSSIBLY DUE TO WATER DAMAGE AT THE MAIN DAM STATION, OR TO ONE OR BOTH SUBSTATIONS LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF THE DAM. PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU REPORTEDLY MADE A QUICK HELICOPTER TRIP TO THE SITE ACCOMPANIED BY OTHER HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

3. STEEL WORKS AT GALATI - THE COMMERCIAL OFFICER FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY INFORMED AN EMBOFF THAT ON JULY 9 ONE OF THE NEWLY INSTALLED SOVIET ELECTRIC FURNACES FOR SPECIAL STEEL FAILED AFTER BEING OVERLOADED AND RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF SIX WORKMEN. THE SOVIET ATTRIBUTED THE ACCIDENT TO ROMANIAN NEGLIGENCE AND TO PRESSURES FOR COMPLETING THE STEEL MILL'S ECONOMIC PLAN QUOTAS AHEAD OF TIME. OTHER SOURCES REPORTED THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE ACCIDENT, TOTAL PRODUCTION TIME LOST IN THAT SECTION OF THE MILL WOULD BE ABOUT FOUR WEEKS.

4. COMMENT: RUMORS AND STORIES OF CONTINUED OCCURRENCES OF INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS ARE RIFE, BOTH AMONG THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AS WELL AS AMONG ROMANIANS. THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT IS ALREADY ALERT TO THE SITUATION (REF B), AND HAS EVEN GONE SO FAR AS TO PLACE POSTERS IN ROMANIAN INSTALLATIONS URGING THE STAFF TO GREATER VIGILANCE AGAINST "ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE." WHETHER THE RECENT RASH OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS IS THE RESULT, EVEN IN PART, EITHER OR WORKER DISSATISFACTION OVER INCREASED OUTPUT PRESSURES, HIGH PRICES AND LOW PAY, (ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS ACTUALLY THE CASE), OR OF A HIGHER INCIDENCE OR MISHAPS DUE TO OVERZEALOUSNESS OF MANAGERS TO COMPLETE HIGH GOAL PLANS, THE RESULT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT CEAUSESCU'S AMBITIOUS INDUSTRIAL GOALS, AND FEED GROWING RUMORS OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS FOR CEAUSESU

RESULTING FROM HIS INTENSE PURSUIT OF SWIFT ECONOMIC GROWTH PAID FOR BY FORCED UNDERCONSUMPTION.
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